

Aspects of Green Hmong Grammar

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Abstract

Many of the Hmong people of Southeast Asia fled to the United States after the end of the Vietnam War. Most of the Hmong populations in the United States today speak one of two closely related dialects of the Hmong language, White and Green Hmong. Of the two, White Hmong has seen significantly more representation in linguistic literature to date. I make use of the literature that does exist regarding Green Hmong and several sources that discuss White Hmong to provide a general description of the grammatical structure that underlies simple sentences in Green Hmong.

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0 Process Statement

There were two foundational reasons why I chose a grammatical study of Green Hmong as my Honors capstone project. First, an in-depth linguistic study was the natural progression of my academic career path. Although I studied specific languages during my undergraduate career, I aspire to a master's and, later, a PhD in some field of linguistics, which I hope to specify as I work my way deeper into the field. With this goal in mind, it made sense to take a step further toward those higher degrees. Second, I have a familial connection to the Green Hmong people in the United States. My brother's wife comes from a Green Hmong background, and the two of them hope to impart at least some of that heritage to their son. Neither my brother nor his wife speak Hmong fluently, so it is in their interest to have access to material that describes the language as it is used in the United States. There is not much material available, and much of what exists is either not available in English or does not use the same orthographic system that is used by the Hmong people who have settled in the United States. For this reason, I chose to use this project to help, if only a little.

When I started a little more than a year and a half ago, I did not fully understand the scale of the task that I had laid out for myself. The semester before, I had completed a similar, though much shorter paper describing the grammatical features of Old High German for my GER 303 course in German grammar. While this was by no means a simple paper, least of all because it had to be written in German, it was relatively easy to assemble the essential information. There already exist multiple sources that have outlined Old High German grammar in detail, so it was mostly a matter of sorting through and compressing the information that was already available to me into an appropriate length.

I quickly learned that significantly fewer sources exist for Green Hmong. Only two grammars exist, to my knowledge, neither of which is or claims to be comprehensive. Thomas Amis Lyman published *A Grammar of Mong Njua* in 1979, which was very limited in scope by the author's own

choosing. Bettina Harriehausen wrote her treatment in German, *Hmong Njua: Syntaktische Analyse einer gesprochenen Sprache* in German in 1990, which had a much broader scope. It simply happened to be a happy coincidence that I had spent the previous four years studying the German language. I did not discover Taweesak Kunyot's 1984 dissertation, which provides a much more thorough description of several features than the other two sources, until about a month ago. For the majority of this paper's life, it has been based primarily on Lyman's and Harriehausen's books.

The limited nature of the sources meant that I had to learn how to synthesize a conclusion based on theoretical frameworks, such as the broader historical conclusions that Martha Ratliff reached in her 2001 investigation into the unwritten history of the Hmong-Mien language group. Further, I used practical examples from the closely related White Hmong dialect, which is generally more prominently featured in linguistic literature than the Green dialect is. It was necessary, however, that I could support any conclusions drawn from sources that did not deal directly with Green Hmong with linguistic examples that showed that the conclusions reached by other authors for White Hmong could also reasonably be applied to Green Hmong as well.

This particular process proved the most difficult and stressful for me. I had initially hoped to work with native speakers as informant for this project, who would be able to provide examples that proved or disproved the points I tried to make. I was particularly hopeful, since the older generations of my brother's wife's family are mostly native speakers of Green Hmong. This process wound up being more complicated than I expected, since her family lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Detroit, Michigan. During their infrequent visits in the past year and a half, their primary concern has been spending time with my nephew, who was born at roughly the same time that I started this project. Much of the fault, of course, lies with me for failing to put in the effort necessary to ensure at least a few conversations occurred during this time period. My brother and I did try to take a trip to

Minneapolis for that express purpose, but the scheduling unfortunately never worked out. In the end, I made the decision to rely on written sources for my linguistic examples.

This decision introduced its own difficulties. My primary sources for written examples were, of course, the various grammars and papers featuring Green Hmong examples, each of which offers glosses and translations of the majority of featured examples. When discussing grammatical features such as Serial Verb Constructions, however, which none of the sources dealing exclusively with Green Hmong approach directly, it became necessary to either find example sentences provided by those authors that could reasonably be analyzed using the framework provided by authors concerned with White Hmong. I made attempts to find examples outside of these sources, but that task proved, ultimately, too difficult for me. My brother's mother-in-law did provide me with several storybooks in Green Hmong that are used to develop elementary school students' understanding of the language. I was able to translate most of them, but very few of the grammatical features I was researching were represented in the elementary-level writing. Any longer and more complex stories honestly exceeded my limited ability to translate the Hmong language into English. In the end, my recent discovery of Kunyot's 1984 dissertation solved most of these problems, since he has much more raw data than either of the other authors.

That is not to say that working with Kunyot's material was without further difficulties. The standard writing system used for Green Hmong in the United States has been the Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA), but Lyman and Kunyot both worked with Hmong populations outside of the United States prior to the more widespread adoption of the RPA throughout Laos. Consequently, both authors used a transcription system devised by Lyman for his 1974 Dictionary of Mong Njua. In order to standardize the transcription system and make Kunyot's material more accessible to those most familiar with Green Hmong as it is used in the United States, I retranscribed each of the examples taken from his

dissertation. I have made use of various dictionaries and online sources to double-check my work, considering my very limited ability to identify mistakes in my own transcription.

Unrelated to the internal difficulties that I faced in structuring and supporting the paper, I also dealt with a dearth of available time to work on the project. Most notably, about three months after I began writing in earnest, I left the country for a semester abroad in Germany. This semester abroad did help me a lot with my conceptual understanding of linguistics and my approach to writing the paper, since I spent this semester studying both historical and contemporary German linguistics. While all of the courses were targeted specifically toward issues in the German language (or, in one case, Old English), they strengthened the linguistic framework that I had developed while taking ENG 320 at Ball State. I did not, however, find the time to work on my thesis during this semester abroad. This was followed immediately upon my return by a period of time spent writing an application for a Fulbright scholarship, after which I picked up a job that often had me working 50 or more hours every week. Both of these developments often left me exhausted, either mentally or physically, at which point it was difficult for me to find the motivation to pick the project up again. I started the work in earnest for the first time in about 8 months at the start of the Spring 2019 semester, primarily motivated by my impending graduation deadline at the end of that semester.

There is a lot more that could be said about the language, particularly regarding the interaction between clauses and ideas on a greater scale. I chose to limit the scope fairly early on in the process when I was studying Harriehausen's 1990 grammar. I had that book for a limited period of time on interlibrary loan, so I wrote the first draft based entirely on that one book, simply to ensure that I had detailed notes on everything that I thought I might need from that source while I still had full access. After completing that draft, I realized that I had well over 75 pages of material with more research to go. At that point, I was only a few weeks away from my departure for Germany, so I made the decision to limit the scope to simple, monoclausal sentence. I am certain that there is more that could be said about

many of the topics that I do discuss, but the paper represents all that I had to learn to be able to understand and translate those sentences in Green Hmong.

Everything taken together, this project has given me a greater respect for the concept of academic research. The difficulties that I had producing this paper while working full time, as well as the complications that manifested themselves when I tried to find the answer to a question whose answer could not simply be found online or in a library helped me understand just what it is that I am working toward in a career in academics. I learned that it is important to recognize not only when but why you don't understand something, and how to find the answer. Perhaps most importantly of all, I learned that I honestly enjoy the entire process and that, if and when I am given the opportunity, I will gladly take on a study of similar or greater scope again.

This paper is meant to be used as a tool; it is meant to help me, my brother, my sister-in-law, my nephew, and anyone else with any interest in Green Hmong pursue that goal. There may be little here that is original, but it is hopefully more accessible than it was before. If that is all that it achieves, I am satisfied with the work that I have done.

1 Introduction

The goal of this study is to provide a description of the grammatical features of the Green dialect of the Hmong language, specifically the phonetics, phonology, and orthography of the language, as well as the syntactic structure of simple phrases and clauses. The Green dialect is spoken alongside the White dialect among Hmong communities in Laos and Thailand, as well as among a significant diaspora in the United States, Canada, Australia, France, French Guiana, and Germany. The community's presence around the globe stems from the Vietnam War, during which the Hmong served as the United States' "secret army" in Laos, where the US was officially neutral. Following the war, nearly 100,000 Hmong people fled to Thailand out of fear of retribution from the newly established communist government in their own country. From Thailand, the majority were resettled in the United States and its allied countries (Vang, 2010; Hamilton-Merritt, 1993)

The White and Green dialects are mutually intelligible, but White Hmong has been much more prominent in linguistic research than Green. To my knowledge, only three scholars have written descriptive grammars of Green Hmong, Thomas Lyman, Taweesak Kunyot, and Bettina Harriehausen. Lyman's *Grammar of Hmong Njua* (1979) was written from its inception with a limited scope, due to Lyman's reservations about applying Western linguistic models to Asian languages. Kunyot's dissertation *General Characteristics of Hmong Njua Grammar* (1984) is a comprehensive descriptive study of the language, while Harriehausen's *Hmong Njua* (1990) was written with a similar goal in mind. Each of these sources, however, provides a barrier to an English speaker hoping to learn Green Hmong. Lyman's and Kunyot's works are written in English, but make use of a transcription system for the Hmong language that is unique to their works. Harriehausen's work makes use of the Romanized Popular

Alphabet (RPA), the writing system most commonly used by Hmong communities in the United States, for Hmong language transcriptions, but her book is written in German.

These problems present both a goal and a series of difficulties to this study. All descriptions and examples taken from the aforementioned sources are presented in English paired with the RPA, which provides easier and more consistent access to that material than has previously been possible for both English speakers and to Hmong speakers in the United States. That means, however, that I have retranslated each example taken from Harriehausen's work (1990), using her German translation as a guide, and that I have transliterated each example taken from Lyman's (1974, 1979) and Kunyot's (1984) materials from Lyman's transcription into the RPA.

2 Phonetics, Phonology, and Orthography

2.1 Orthography

Every Hmong writing system currently in use was developed during the 20th century. There are two systems that make use of Latin characters, one used by native speakers and scholars in China, and the Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA), which is used by the Hmong people in Southeast Asia and the diaspora in the United States and other countries. Additionally, there are two original systems in current use, the Pollard script, mostly used for the related A-Hmao language in southern China, and the Pahawh script, which was developed by the Hmong leader Shong Lue Yang in Laos in the middle of the 20th century (Ratliff, 2007). The RPA is the most prominent writing system among the Green Hmong people of Southeast Asia and in the corresponding diaspora in the United States. For this reason, the RPA will be used throughout this study.

Thomas Lyman's *Grammar of Hmong Njua* (1979) and *Dictionary of Hmong Njua* (1974) make use of a unique transcription system devised by Lyman for the purpose of these works. Kunyot (1984,

pp. 7) chose to use Lyman's system, since there was no standardization at the time. All examples from these sources have been transliterated into the RPA.

Harriehausen (1990) offers four rules that govern the orthography of the RPA, summarized below:

1. Each syllable contains either a single vowel or a diphthong (a, e, u, ai, ia).
2. If a single vowel is doubled (ee, oo, aa), it shows that the vowel is nasalized. This is similar to an “-ng” following a vowel in English.
3. Complex consonants at the beginning of a syllable are written as a combination of individual consonants. For example, the letters “h” and “n” often influence the surrounding consonants. Namely, an “h” following a consonant indicates that the preceding consonant is aspirated, while an “n” before a consonant indicates prenasalization, which follows the rules of assimilation. Therefore, it is pronounced [m] before “p”, [n] before “t, d, r” and [ŋ] before “k”.
4. The final written consonant represents the tone of the syllable, which is pronounced during the articulation of the vowel. Any syllable that is not followed by a consonant exhibits a mid-level tone. Green Hmong has 7 standard tones. There is an eighth tone, a variant of the seventh, which is used by native speakers to communicate a sense of politeness.

- b (high)
- j (high falling)
- v (mid rising)
- (mid)
- s (mid-deep)
- g (mid-deep whispery)
- m (deep glottalized)
- d (deep rising)

Outside of the above rules, the RPA's symbols correspond directly with the represented phonemes.

2.2 Tone

As stated above, there are eight phonetically distinct tones present in Green Hmong. Each tone is defined relative to the other tones and contrasts with them, so that they serve a lexical role.

Consequently, minimal pairs can be found that differ only in tone:

pov	=	throw	pom	=	see
tuag	=	die	tua	=	kill
nkawj	=	bee	nkaws	=	only

Both Harriehausen (1990) and Lyman (1979) describe a phenomenon called “tone sandhi”, which takes its name from a Sanskrit word meaning “linking, combination”. Tone sandhi occurs when most tones follow either the high tone (-b) or the falling tone (-j). The tone of the subsequent syllable changes according to the following pattern:

(-j), (-s), (-m)	->	(-g)
(-v)	->	(-)
(-)	->	(-s)

Both authors note that the high tone (-b) and the breathy tone (-g) do not change in this circumstance. Neither author offers any data on tone 8 (-d).

It is important to note that tone sandhi only occurs in these environments, but it is equally necessary to realize that it does not always occur. Neither Harriehausen (1990) nor Lyman offer were able to make any consistent observation on tone sandhi’s use, to the point that Lyman’s (1979) informants in some villages would insist that tone sandhi was necessary in all of the described environments, while informants from other locations would use tone sandhi inconsistently or leave it out altogether (pp. 11-12). It is difficult, then, to describe a consistent rule.

Harriehausen (1990: pp. 23-24) observed a second type of tone change, limited to the change from tone 7 (-m) to tone 8 (-d). She was unwilling to make any firm statement regarding this variation,

but noted two general uses: first, as a gesture of politeness, second, in environments where both tones stand in free variation, particularly in locative phrases and demonstrative pronouns in sentence-final position, tone 8 appears to be preferred. In other positions, only tone 7 is permitted.

2.3 Consonants

Consonants in Green Hmong are marked by the presence or absence of a nasal onset, aspiration, and a lateral resolution. Harriehausen (1990: pp. 25-26) identified a consistent orthographic order by which these distinctions are marked:

(Pre-nasalization) + consonant + (aspiration) + (lateral resolution)

A consonant may appear with any or all of these three features, although not all features may be paired with every consonant.

Pre-nasalization is indicated by the orthographic symbol “n”, when it precedes a consonant. This represents a nasalization that is assimilated to the following consonant ([m] before (p), [n] before (t) or (d), etc.).

Aspiration is represented by an “h” following a consonant. Every stop and fricative demonstrates an unaspirated (unmarked) and an aspirated variant.

Lateral resolution refers to the release of pressure by lowering the sides of the tongue, most easily described after the consonant “t”, where the tip of the tongue remains in the alveolar position used to pronounce the “t” while the sides drop to produce the “l” sound. While lateral resolution is used with multiple consonants in Green Hmong, the phoneme /t/ is notable because it does not appear in the White dialect, while it is possible in Green Hmong. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 25-26)

2.3.1 Consonants in detail

The following phonemes, marked by “/” brackets, are presented using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Where no other comment is given, the orthography of the RPA is identical to the IPA transcription of the same phoneme. Notes are provided where the transcriptions differ from the RPA.

Nasal

a) Bilabial nasal /m/:

b) Alveolar nasal /n/:

c) Palatal nasal /ɲ/:

This phoneme is written as ‘ny’.

d) Velar nasal /ŋ/:

This phoneme only appears in two contexts: after a vowel, where it is orthographically represented by the reduplication of the vowel, and before a nasalized /k/, where it is represented as ‘nk’.

Stops

All stops are voiceless. Each stop has two forms, aspirated and unaspirated. These forms are contrastive, allowing minimal pairs to be formed.

Example: keb = solve (a problem)

 kheb = crocodile

a) Bilabial stop /p/, /ph/:

b) Alveolar stop /t/, /th/:

c) Retroflexive stop /ɖ/, /ɖh/:

These phonemes are written as ‘r’ and ‘rh’.

d) Palatal stop /c/, /ch/:

- e) Velar stop /k/, /kh/:
- f) Uvular stop /q/, /qh/:

Nasal + Stop

This type of cluster is written with the symbol “n” preceding the consonant. It must be remembered that the nasalization assimilates to the following consonant. It is also worthy of note that the voicing of the nasal is not carried over into the stop. According to Harriehausen (1990: pp. 35), this is distinct from the White dialect of Hmong.

- a) Nasal + bilabial stop /np/, /nph/
- b) Nasal + alveolar stop /nt/, /nth/
- c) Nasal + retroflexive stop /nt̚/, /nt̚h/

Written as ‘nr’ and ‘nrh’, respectively.

- d) Nasal + palatal stop /nc/, /nch/
- e) Nasal + velar stop /nk/, /nkh/
- f) Nasal + uvular stop /nq/, /nqh/

Stop + Lateral

As with the preceding nasal, Harriehausen (1990: pp. 36) demonstrated that the voicing of the lateral is not assimilated into the preceding consonant. Rather, the unvoiced consonant is followed after a brief moment of affrication by the voiced lateral.

- a) Bilabial stop + lateral /pl/, /plh/
- b) Alveolar stop + lateral /tl/, /tlh/

Harriehausen states that this consonant cluster has two phonetic realizations, which occur in free variation: /tl/ = /kl/ and /tlh/ = /khl/.

Nasal + Stop + Lateral

Harriehausen (1990: pp. 37) observed that, although there are two distinct sets of stops that allow a lateral resolution, only one of those clusters also allows pre-nasalization:

- a) Nasal + bilabial stop + lateral /npl/, /nphl/

Continuants

In her grammar, Harriehausen (1990: pp. 37) used the term “Dauerlaute” (continuants) instead of “Frikativa” (fricatives) to allow the lateral /l/ to occupy this classification. She does so in order to preserve the symmetry between voiced and unvoiced phoneme pairs. Although each pair is orthographically distinguished, she argues that almost all of these pairs are in a complementary distribution and, therefore, allophones of a single phoneme. The relative arguments are outlined under each pair.

- a) Labiodental fricative /f/, /v/

Harriehausen argues that the phoneme, which she refers to as /v/, turns into the allophone [f] when it comes before a dark vowel. Disregarding loan words, Harriehausen was unable to find any examples of the two consonants occurring before the same vowel.

- b) Alveolar fricative /s/

The alveolar fricative is an exception to the pattern, in that there is no voiced counterpart to the unvoiced consonant. This phoneme is written as ‘x’.

- c) Retroflexive fricative /ʂ/, /ʐ/

Harriehausen first notes that there are no minimal pairs to be found between these consonants, written as ‘s’ and ‘z’. Further, she observes that ‘s’ never appears before a breathy vowel (one

modified by the breathy tone (-g)), while 'z' usually, though not always, precedes a breathy vowel.

d) Palatal fricative /ç/, /j̃/

These are written as 'hy' and 'j', respectively. Harriehausen's informants always used the voiceless variant in their own speech, but were willing to accept the voiced variant without any change of meaning in all cases.

e) Lateral continuant /l/, /l̃/

f) Glottal fricative /h/

Affricates

a) Alveolar affricate /ts/, /tsh/

Written as 'tx' and 'txh', respectively.

b) Retroflexive affricate /tʂ/, /tʂh/

Written as 'ts' and 'tsh', respectively.

Nasal + Affricate

As with the nasal as applied to stops, the voicing of the nasal does not carry over into the affricate.

a) Nasal + alveolar affricate /nts/, /ntsh/

Written as 'ntx' and 'ntxh', respectively.

b) Nasal + retroflexive affricate /ntʂ/, /ntʂh/

Written as 'nts' and 'ntsh', respectively.

2.4 Vowels

Harriehausen (1990) does not give an in-depth study of the vowels found in Green Hmong, offering only a chart showing the location of articulation. Lyman (1979), although he used a transcription of his own design, offered an explanation of how his vowels (which were very similar, though not identical to those used in the RPA) compared to the IPA transcriptions of the same vowels. This will allow Lyman's IPA transcriptions, including a few variations in pronunciation that he observed, to be used to describe the vowels found in Green Hmong.

Single Vowels

- a) /i/ or /i/, written as 'i'.
- b) /e/, written as 'e'.
- c) /ɰ/, written as 'w'.
- d) /a/ or /æ/, written as 'a'.
- e) /u/, written as 'u'.
- f) /o/, written as 'o'.

Diphthongs

- a) /ai/ or /ae/, written as 'ai'.
- b) /au/, written as 'au'.
- c) /ua/, written as 'ua'.
- d) /aɰ/, written as 'au'.

Lyman's grammar does not recognize the simple vowel /o/, but does recognize a fifth diphthong, /ao/. A comparison of Lyman's transcription of the story "Dlig Muag, Ceg Tawv (Blind of Eye, Lame of

Leg)’ in his 1979 grammar, using his unique transcription system, and the 1986 publication of the same story, also by Lyman, but this time in the RPA, shows that his earlier diphthong /ao/ described the same vowel as the RPA’s /o/.

Nasalized Vowels

Certain simple vowels can be followed by a velar nasal (/ŋ/), shown orthographically through the reduplication of the vowel. In this case, Lyman (1979: pp. 9) observes that the vowel itself becomes nasalized. This nasalization is limited to the simple vowels /a/, /e/, and /o/.

3 The Noun Phrase

3.1 Structure

Although she allowed for further research, Ratliff (1991) describes the composition of a White Hmong noun phrase (NP) as follows:

(POSS) (Q) (CLF) N (ADJ) (DEM)

Although her primary concern in the cited article was the appearance of multiple classifiers in certain examples, Ratliff finds the NP structure to remain unaffected, that is, that the syntactic role of certain morphemes and groups of morphemes may change based on the context, but the underlying syntactic structure of the phrase does not change. In the cases studied, she believes that the second classifier has been reassessed as a component of a compound noun:

1. phau ntawv
 pile (of) paper
 “(a) book”

This allows another word to be understood as the acting classifier in the phrase, as in the following example:

2. cov phau ntawv
 GRP pile paper
 “(the) books”

What this demonstrates is that the syntactic role of each word is determined by its position in the phrase. This remains true across the divide of word class, albeit in limited circumstances. Simply stated, the uninflected morphemes are capable of expressing a wide variety of meanings based on their use within a comparatively rigid syntactic structure.

While Ratliff (1991) wrote concerning the White dialect, Kunyot (1984: pp. 43-45) describes an identical structure for noun phrases in Green Hmong, barring some differences in terminology:

Noun Phrase = +/- Possessive +/- Quantifier +/- Mod 1 (classifier) + Head noun +/- Mod 2 (descriptive verb/relative clause) +/- Mod 3 (demonstrative)

(Adapted from Kunyot, 1984: pp. 44)

Kunyot admits that it is rare to see the full pattern reproduced in a single sentence, but does offer a nearly complete example:

- | | Poss | Quant | Mod1 | HN | Mod2 | Mod2 | | | |
|----|------------|-----------|------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| 3. | <u>Kuv</u> | <u>ob</u> | <u>lub</u> | <u>tsho</u> | <u>dawb</u> | <u>nyias</u> | <u>nyias</u> | <u>klua</u> | <u>lawm</u> . |
| | 1sg | two | CL | shirt | white | thin | thin | torn | already |
- “My two thin white shirts have been torn.” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 45)

The similarity between the dialects suggests that Ratliff’s (1991) conclusions can reasonably be applied to the same structures in Green Hmong.

3.2 Nouns

Nouns in Hmong can be generally classified as either count nouns or mass nouns. The syntactic distinction is simple: count nouns may be quantified, while mass nouns may not. In addition, nouns are

not inflected to show number, therefore, an indefinite count noun can be understood, based on the context, to be either singular or plural, as in the following example:

4. Kuv yuav tsev. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 123)
 1sg buy house
 "I am buying a house/some houses."

If it is necessary to specify one or the other, it is possible to do so through the use of a quantifier or a classifier:

5. Kuv yuav ib tsev.
 1sg buy one house
 "I am buying a house."
6. Kuv yuav tsib tsev.
 1sg buy five house
 "I am buying five houses."
7. Kuv yuav cov tsev.
 1sg buy CL house
 "I am buying some houses."

Kunyot (1984: pp. 70-72) noted that simple nouns can be used to construct both compound verbs and nouns, as in the following examples:

8. sab zoo
 heart well
 "to be kind" (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 72)
9. tsev kawm ntawv
 house study book
 "school" (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 72)

3.2.1 Personal pronouns

There are nine personal pronouns in Green Hmong, categorized by three persons and three numbers. None of these pronouns appear with a classifier.

	Singular (1)	Dual (2)	Plural (more than 2)
1	kuv: “I”	wb: “we two”	peb: “we”
2	koj: “you”	meb: “you two”	mej: “you (all)”
3	nwg: “he, she, it”	(ob tub): “those two”	puab: “they”

(Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 123-124)

As with nouns, none of these pronouns can be inflected to show their syntactic role. Therefore, depending on its position in the sentence, *kuv*, as an example, can be translated as “I”, “me”, “myself”, or “my”. This is demonstrated by the following example:

10. *Kuv* *puv* *kuv* *nyob* *huv* *tlaam* *av.* (Harriehausen, 1990: pp.125)
 1sg see 1sg remain LOC CLF glass
 “I see myself in the mirror.”

3.2.2 Indefinite pronouns

Harriehausen (1990: pp. 131-133) identified three indefinite pronouns in Green Hmong, *leej twg*, “someone”, *yaam twg*, “something”, and *tlaab tsi* “something”, “anything”. According to Harriehausen’s research, *yaam twg* is a little bit peculiar, in that it may only be used as the subject of a sentence. *Leej twg* and *tlaab tsi*, however, can be used in any syntactic position normally filled by a noun.

3.2.3 Interrogative pronouns

The interrogative pronouns *leej twg* “who?” and *tlaab tsi* “what, where, why?” are morphologically identical to the indefinite pronouns, which causes the correct interpretation to be heavily dependent on context (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 133-135; Kunyot, 1984: pp. 92).

3.3 Classifiers

Nouns in Green Hmong are often preceded by a classifier, depending on the context. The classifier is used to convey more specific information about the noun, such as plurality, shape, function, etc. Many nouns are consistently paired with a single classifier (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 98-99), although this pairing is often used to distinguish between two related, though distinct concepts. Sakuragi and Fuller's 2013 study demonstrates that native speakers of White Hmong did not unanimously select the same classifier to pair with the same noun used in reference to the same object. The authors posited that the speakers selected the classifier that best expressed the physical and functional properties of the object described according to each individual's own perspective.

Ratliff (1990) refers to a strong connection between classifiers and nouns, where a significant number of classifiers share an identical morphological form with a noun expressing a related meaning, e.g. *phau* (noun) "pile" and *phau* (classifier) "pile of (noun)". She further developed this connection in her later book, *Hmong-Mien Language History* (2010), where she makes the case that the classifier system in all Hmongic languages was developed as a result of linguistic contact with Chinese, which had already developed a classifier system. As a result, classifiers were either borrowed directly from Chinese or were grammaticalized from Hmong nouns. In a number of cases, classifiers borrowed from Chinese may also be used as class nouns (pp. 228-231). Because of the resulting lexical overlap between the classifiers and nouns, classifiers are perhaps best defined syntactically.

Classifiers do not mean "the" in and of themselves. The presence of a classifier in a NP may contribute to an interpretation of definiteness, although the semantic context plays a significant role as well. Consequently, *phau ntawv*, "book", can be translated as "book", "a book", or "the book", depending on the context.

As mentioned, the classifier is used to specify certain traits of the noun, primarily shape or function. What follows is a list of some common classifiers with a wide range of use, as well as a few uncommon classifiers with more specific meanings:

(1) Tug

Tug can be used to denote most animate nouns describing animals and people, as well as objects that move uninfluenced, such as the ocean. Alternatively, it can be used to describe inanimate objects and body parts that have a slender form and, usually, have the ability to stand up. (Harriehausen 1990: pp.100).

11. ib tug nyui
one CL cow
“a cow” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 78)
12. ib tug ntoo
one CL tree
“a tree” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 78)
13. ib tug ntiv teg
one CL finger
“a finger” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 79)

(2) Lub

Lub describes round or bulky inanimate objects (Harriehausen 1990: pp. 102-103).

14. lub pob zeb
CL stone
“stone” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 79)
15. ib lub tsev
one CL house
“a house” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 79)
16. tsib lub hli
five CL moon
“five months” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 79)

(3) Txhais

Txhais is a counterpart to *lub*, in that it denotes things that come in pairs that are not round, such as feet, hands, arms, and legs (Harriehausen 1990: pp.103-104).

17. ob txhais teg
two CL hand
“two hands” (Kunyt, 1984: pp. 82)

18. ib txhais khau
one CL shoe
“one shoe” (Kunyt, 1984: pp. 82)

(4) Tsaab

Tsaab generally describes manually operated tools and weapons, including hammers, rifles, bows, knives, forks, and spoons (Harriehausen 1990: pp. 104-105).

19. ib tsaab dlav
one CL spoon
“one spoon” (Kunyt, 1984: pp. 80)

20. ib tsaab phom
one CL gun
“one gun” (Kunyt, 1984: pp. 79)

(5) Txuj

Txuj (*txoj* in White Hmong) indicates objects that are long, string-like objects as well as concepts that are metaphorically associated with strings. The nouns paired with *txuj* range from hair, belts, and rubber bands to, roads, fortune, and life itself (Harriehausen 1990: pp. 105-106). The use of the White Hmong classifier *txoj* serves a central role in Riddle’s (2001) paper “The String Metaphor in Language and Life in Hmong”, where she emphasized not only the importance of the physical and metaphorical appearance of an object or concept to the use of this classifier, but also the ability of the referent to function as a string. Further, *txoj* serves as an example of the ancient adoption and treatment of Chinese classifiers in the Hmong language, by means of its shift toward use as a class noun in compound nouns (Ratliff 2010: pp. 231) such as *txoj hmoo*,

“fortune” (example taken from Heimbach (1979)), literally “string (of) luck”, and *txoj lus* “phrase, sentence, saying” (example taken from Riddle (2001)), literally “string (of) words.”

21. ib txuj xov
 one CL string
 “a string” (Kunyt, 1984: pp. 81)
22. peb txuj hlua
 three CL rope
 “three pieces of rope” (Kunyt, 1984: pp. 81)

In addition to their use in classifying nouns based on physical and metaphorical traits and functions, classifiers are also used to specify plurality and the type of group that is being described by the NP, as well as descriptions of a large quantity of mass nouns. Examples include the following:

(1) Cov

Cov is a frequently used classifier to express simple plurality. While an unclassified noun can be understood as either singular or plural based on the context, a noun modified by *cov* may only be understood as plural (Harriehausen 1990: pp. 115-117).

23. kuv yuav cov tsev. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 123)
 1sg buy CL hous
 “I am buying some houses.”

(2) Thooj

Thooj denotes a large piece of something, especially metals in an unrefined state. Hence the following comparison (Harriehausen 1990: pp. 114-115)

24. ob thooj kuj
 two CLF Gold
 “Two lumps of gold.”
25. ob lub kuj
 two CLF gold
 “Two pieces of gold (jewelry).”

3.4 Quantifiers

When a cardinal number occurs in a NP, it precedes any classifier, which must appear in any NP that includes a cardinal number, according to Harriehausen (1990). The numbers follow:

<i>ib</i>	=	<i>one</i>
<i>ob</i>	=	<i>two</i>
<i>peb</i>	=	<i>three</i>
<i>plaub</i>	=	<i>four</i>
<i>tsib</i>	=	<i>five</i>
<i>rau</i>	=	<i>six</i>
<i>hlaa</i>	=	<i>seven</i>
<i>jim</i>	=	<i>eight</i>
<i>cuaj</i>	=	<i>nine</i>
<i>kaum</i>	=	<i>ten</i>

The numbers eleven through nineteen are formed according to the pattern *kaum ib*, “ten one”, *kaum ob*, “ten two”. This is followed by:

<i>neeg nkaum</i>	=	<i>twenty</i>
<i>neeg nkaum ib</i>	=	<i>twenty-one</i>
<i>peb caug</i>	=	<i>thirty</i>
<i>plaug caug</i>	=	<i>forty</i>
<i>tsib caug</i>	=	<i>fifty</i>
<i>rau caum</i>	=	<i>sixty</i>
<i>hlaa caum</i>	=	<i>seventy</i>
<i>jim caum</i>	=	<i>eighty</i>
<i>cuaj caum</i>	=	<i>ninety</i>

Note the presence of tone sandhi in these examples, where the root form *caum* becomes *caug* when it follows the high tone *-b*.

The same pattern is followed for hundreds and thousands:

<i>ib pua</i>	=	<i>one hundred</i>
<i>ob pua</i>	=	<i>two hundred</i>
<i>ob pua plaub caum</i>	=	<i>two hundred forty</i>
<i>ib txhiab</i>	=	<i>one thousand</i>

In addition to the numbers themselves, the following morphemes may be used as quantifiers:

(1) Ntaw ntaw

Ntaw ntaw may appear as a quantifier or as an adjective (after the noun), Harriehausen (1990: pp. 92-93) argues that this difference indicates the noun's category as either a count noun, when *ntaw ntaw* appears prenominally, or as a mass noun, when it appears postnominally. If so, the prenominal use could be translated as "many", while the postnominal use would be, properly, "much".

(2) Qhov or tsawg

Both of these morphemes may be translated as "some" or "a few". Each may appear in the prenominal position shared with other quantifiers (Harriehausen 1990: pp. 93-95).

(3) Pis tsawg

Pis tsawg is an interrogative, asking "how many?" or "how much?". It appears in the same prenominal position, although it may be used on its own with the meaning of "how much does it cost?" (Harriehausen 1990: pp. 134-135).

(4) Taag nro

Taag nro simply means "all". This morpheme appears before the entire NP, including any possessives (Harriehausen 1990: pp. 95).

3.5 Adjectives

There is some ambiguity in the classification of adjectives in both Green and White Hmong. This is due to the fact that identical morphemes may be used in at least three syntactic manners, as an attribute in a noun phrase, as a predicative verb, and adverbially in a verb phrase. Jarkey (1991: pp. 47) and Kunyot (1984) take the widely accepted position that descriptive words in White Hmong and Green Hmong, respectively, should be treated as verbs due to their ability to function identically to intransitive

verbs, while Harriehausen (1990: pp. 144-145) argued that the category of adjective is necessary due to these words' attributive and adverbial uses, neither of which are open to most intransitive verbs.

Considering the syntactic flexibility that Hmong has already been shown to possess, it does not seem unreasonable to conclude that the same morpheme is able to function as an adjective in one syntactic context and as a verb in another without generating any conflict.

According to Harriehausen (1990: pp. 144-145), the established word order in a noun phrase requires adjectives to appear after the head noun in the phrase, although Jarkey (1991: pp. 32-33) lists a few exceptions to this rule in White Hmong. To my knowledge, no sources describe similar exceptions in Green Hmong. An additional adjective may be added to the phrase with or without the coordinating conjunction *hab*. If the conjunction is not used, the syntactic flexibility afforded adjectives allows a certain level of ambiguity in interpretation, as each adjective may be interpreted either as a verb or attributively:

26. ob phau ntawv loi hab dawb. (Harriehausen 1990: pp. 145)
 two CLF book large COORD white
 "Two large, white books."
27. Nwg tug miv luj rov. (Harriehausen 1990: pp. 145)
 3sg CLF cat large fat
 "His/her large, fat cat."
 "His large cat is fat."
 "His cat is large and fat."

3.6 Demonstratives

Demonstrative in Green Hmong may appear as a determiner at the end of a NP or be used as a pronoun in copulative expressions.

28. ntawm yog tlaab tsi
 DEM be what
 "What is that?" (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 74)

These three pronouns are used to indicate an object based on its distance from the speaker:

<i>nuav</i>	=	this
<i>ntawm</i>	=	that (near)
<i>tom</i>	=	that (far)

According to Harriehausen (1990: pp. 139-144), the precise distance at which *tom* is used as opposed to *ntawm* varies based on each individual speaker.

3.7 Possessive

Possession is expressed in Green Hmong by the placement of a noun or pronoun at the beginning of the noun phrase. In most cases, it is followed by a classifier. A noun phrase that already contains a possessive may be used as the possessor in another phrase, as in the following example:

29. kuv pub kuv tug pooj yeg tug miv.
 (Harriehausen 1990: pp. 118)
 1sg see 1sg CLF friend CLF cat
 "I see my friend's cat."

According to Kunyot (1984: pp. 44, 48), there is a possessive marker, *le*, which may optionally be used with the possessive NP.

30. tsiv le ob tug nees dawb nuav.
 father poss two CL horse white this
 "These two white horses of my father." (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 48)

The meaning of the phrase is not altered by the presence or the absence of *le*, but the marker is useful for clarity in some of the transformations available to the phrase:

31. ob tug nees dawb yog tsiv le.
 two CL horse white be father poss
 "The two white horses are my father's." (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 49)

4 The Verb Phrase

Kunyot (1984: pp. 52) proposed the following general structure for verb phrases in Green

Hmong:

VP = +/- Pre-Modifier (preverb). + Main Verb. +/- Post-Modifier 1 (postverb).

+/- Post-Modifier 2 (adverb). +/- Post-Modifier 3 (intensifier).

(Kunyot, 1984: pp. 52)

This structure is general, meaning that the various types of verb phrase follow unique sets of rules within this overarching structure. Harriehausen (1990) and Jarkey (1991) both identify three general types of main verbs: intransitive verbs, transitive verbs, and motion verbs, each of which demands a unique syntactic structure. Kunyot (1984) uses three alternate classes of main verb: active verbs, descriptive verbs, and copulative verbs, with their accompanying structures. The classifications favored by Harriehausen and Jarkey will be used here, since they clarify somewhat the later discussion of serial verbs.

4.1 Intransitive verbs

Intransitive verbs are generally defined by the absence of a NP functioning as direct object. Although copulative verb phrases equate two NPs, the syntactic role of the second NP is functionally distinct from a direct object. Harriehausen (1990) distinguishes between intransitive and motion verbs, due to the fact that motion verbs often take a syntactic object to indicate location or destination.

4.1.1 Copulative verbs

Copulative verbs equate two NPs by means of a verb, such as “to be” in English. Kunyot (1984) and Harriehausen (1990) both identify *yog* (to be) as the most prominent copulative verb.

32. Tug miv puas yog tsaj. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 205)
 CL cat Q be animal
 “Is a cat an animal?”

Kunyot (1984: pp. 17) includes two more verbs in his list of copulative verbs, though the resemblance may be superficial. He includes *ua* (to make, do), and *nyob* (to be, live). Although *ua* typically means something closer to “to make” or “to do”, and *nyob* means “to reside, remain”, Kunyot (1984) argues that they have a stronger sense of “to be” in the following examples:

33. leeg twg xaav nyob ndawm nuav
 who want remain at this
 “Who wants to be here.” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 59)

34. nwg ua tuab neeg zoo
 3sg make person good
 “He is a good person.” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 21)

35. koj ua tug ua
 3sg make CLF make(r)
 “You are the maker.” (Xiong, et al., 1983: pp. 534)

It seems most consistent to interpret these uses of *nyob* and *ua* according to their typical meanings, even if it makes more sense to translate them using the English verb “to be” in certain contexts.

4.1.2 Adjectives

As described previously, the syntactic flexibility afforded to adjectives in Green Hmong allows them to function as attributes of a noun, as full verbs, and adverbially. Here, their verbal use is explored.

In descriptive sentences, adjectives are used as the predicate of the sentence without the need for a “be” verb, which is necessary in English. The following sentence is typical of descriptive sentences in Green Hmong:

36. Maria daim tiab dawb. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 147)
 Maria CL skirt white
 “Maria’s skirt is white.”

In contrast, the following sentence is ungrammatical:

37. *daim tiab yog dawb (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 148)
 CL skirt be white

Adjectives are able to function, then, as syntactic verbs. This conclusion is further supported by the fact that adjectives accept some of the same modifiers as other verb classes (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 148-149). This conclusion would further support Ratliff’s (1990, 2010) claim of lexical flexibility in Hmong.

4.2 Transitive verbs

Transitive verbs are distinguished by their ability to take a NP as the object of the VP. The direct object of a transitive verb follows the verb directly. Harriehausen (1990: pp. 185-188) notes, however, that many verbs are able to take both direct objects (DO) and indirect objects (IO).

38. Kuv muab nyaj rua miv nyuab. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 186)
 1sg give money DIR child
 DO IO
 “I am giving the child money.”

In this example, the preposition *rua* is used similarly to the English “to” to indicate the direction or “target” of the action. This appears to hold true even in cases where the action is not physically directed at the IO, such as the following example:

39. Peter yuav ib tlaim tab rua Maria. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 187)
 Peter buy NUM CL dress DIR Maria
 “Peter is buying Maria a dress.”

Harriehausen used English to provide a model to understand the pattern in Green Hmong. The English language offers two syntactic methods of introducing the IO, demonstrated by the following sentences:

He gave her the flowers.

He gave the flowers to her.

*He gave the flowers her.

In the first example, the IO has been inserted into the phrase between the verb and the DO. The third, ungrammatical sentence, shows that an unmodified IO may not appear after the DO. If the IO appears in any other position in the sentence, it must be expressed through a prepositional phrase with the preposition “to”. It is this latter pattern that most closely resembles the pattern in Green Hmong.

Although Harriehausen’s informants were willing to accept an imitation of the first English pattern (V + IO + DO), none of them produced this pattern individually (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 186). The prepositional pattern (“*rua*” + NP) appears, then, to be the consistent pattern used to mark IOs in Green Hmong. This is supported by numerous examples from Kunyot (1984):

40. kuv muab nyaj rua miv nyuam yau.
 1sg give money to children young
 “I give money to the little children.” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 16)

41. pig kig niam yuav yuav txiv ntoo rua kuv.
 Tomorrow mother will buy fruit to 1sg
 “My mother will buy fruit for me tomorrow.” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 17)

4.3 Motion verbs

Harriehausen (1990) and Jarkey (1991) make the case that verbs describing motion in Green and White Hmong, respectively, should be considered a separate class of verbs for, among other reasons, the unique syntactic role that they play in serial verb constructions (SVCs). Beside the fact that multi-verb constructions are prominent in descriptions of motion, Jarkey (1991: pp. 168-170) argues that in White Hmong it is impossible for multiple action verbs (transitive and intransitive) to be combined in what she refers to as a coterporal SVC, but that it is possible to combine motion verbs with either other motion verbs or action verbs, that is the structures “motion + motion” and “motion + action” are possible, while the structure “action + action” is ungrammatical. This demonstrates that the

semantic class of motion verbs follow a different set of syntactic rules from other verb types, even though they can variously resemble transitive and intransitive verbs in isolation (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 151; Jarkey, 1991: pp. 158-163).

Jarkey (1991: pp. 157-158) discusses the prominence of “motion + motion” SVCs in White Hmong and the reasoning behind their use. The combination of a relatively short list of motion verbs through serialization allows speakers of Hmong to express “a single situation in terms of various component aspects”. As an example, she showed that a language with a high level of lexical complexity in particular semantic cases, such as English, uses distinct lexemes to express similar actions like “take” and “bring”. By contrast, Hmong serializes the verbs “carry” and “go” to express the same idea as “take” and “carry” and “come” to express the idea of “bring”. When understood together, these component verbs, then, communicate a single, complex motion event by describing the individual, simple aspects of that event.

Toward the end of defining the individual aspects of a motion event, both Harriehausen and Jarkey identify different types of motion verbs which, when they appear together in a SVC, must appear in a certain order. The lists are as follows:

Harriehausen (1990)

1. Motion
2. Direction
3. Deictic

(Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 154-155; Jarkey, 1991: pp. 163)

Jarkey (1991)

- I. Manner of Motion
 - a. “Transport” verbs
 - b. “Locomotion” verbs
- II. Motion with Respect to GROUND
 - a. “Path” verbs
 - b. “Source” verbs
 - c. Motion with respect to previous motion
 - d. “Goal” verbs

These lists are functionally identical, as Jarkey (1991: pp. 158) indicated that the sub-types within each heading must occur in the given order when more than one verb of type I or type II occurred

in the same SVC. Consequently, Jarkey’s “goal” verbs, which are equivalent to Harriehausen’s deictic verbs, must appear last in any verb series. Harriehausen has simply drawn a conceptual line between this type of verb and verbs expressing direction, while Jarkey has not. Each sub-type in White Hmong, as defined by Jarkey, will be discussed in detail and related to Green Hmong below.

4.3.1 “Transport” verbs

Jarkey (1991: pp. 159) identified these verbs as the first element of any cotemporal SVC in which they appear, as in the earlier examples of “carry go” and “carry come”. These verbs are transitive and communicate how an object, animal, or person is transported, particularly through carrying, leading, or accompanying. Harriehausen (1990) does not specifically identify these verbs as part of a motion SVC or as part of her ordering of motion verbs, but at least one example of this verb type in an SVC can be seen in a clause extracted from a monologue included at the end of Harriehausen’s grammar:

42. ...ces puab ngaa puab cov pob moog nraag nrhaav pob
 (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 250)
 COORD 1pl carry 1pl CL ball go down there field ball
 “Then they take their balls (and) go down to the ball field.”

4.3.2 “Locomotion” verbs

Jarkey (1991: pp. 159) describes these verbs as intransitive verbs that simply express the manner with which the subject moves through space, such as “fly”, “jump”, and “crawl”. Harriehausen (1990: pp. 151) presents the following list:

<u>dhla</u>	(run/jump)
<u>yaa</u>	(fly)
<u>dlaum</u>	(climb)
<u>nkaag</u>	(crawl)
<u>moog</u>	(walk)
<u>(ua-) luam dlej</u>	(swim)
<u>kiv</u>	(turn)
<u>moog kev</u>	(stroll)
<u>lug</u>	(come)

43. puab dhla lug ndawm nuav.
 3pl run come at this
 “They run down here.” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 19)

4.3.3 “Path” verbs

Jarkey (1991: pp. 160) identifies these as transitive verbs that indicate the path of motion in relation to an object, such as “follow”, “pass”, “ascend”, and “descend”. It is possible for multiple path verbs to occur in a single SVC in White Hmong, in which case the verbs “ascend” and “descend” appear after the other path verbs. Harriehausen does not distinguish this category of verbs from other verbs of direction, but does identify the Green Hmong equivalents of some of the White Hmong words used by Jarkey as directional verbs:

<u>hlaa</u>	(cross)
<u>taug</u>	(follow)
<u>nce</u>	(ascend, climb)
(Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 296)	

4.3.4 “Source” verbs

Jarkey (1991: pp. 161) explains that these verbs indicate the source of the motion. They are not transitive in form, but rather take a locative phrase formed from a preposition (Jarkey uses the term “spatial deictic”) and a NP, a structure that will be explored in detail later. Harriehausen, again, does not distinguish these verbs as a class, but includes them in her broad list of directional verbs:

<u>tawm</u>	(leave)
<u>sawv</u>	(stand up)
(Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 296)	

4.3.5 Motion with respect to previous motion

Jarkey (1991: pp. 161) treats this as a closed slot that can only be filled by a single word, *rov* “return”. She gives this word special attention because its appearance is extremely common in motion

SVCs. Harriehausen recognizes this word, again, as a directional verb: *tov qaab* (return) (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 296).

44. nwg tov qaab moog tsev.
 3sg return go home
 “He goes back home.” (Kunyt, 1984: pp. 19)

4.3.6 “Goal” verbs

Jarkey (1991: pp. 162-163) identifies three White Hmong verbs in this class, *mus* “go”, *los tuaj* “come”, and a word she translates as “come/return home”. These correspond to Green Hmong *moog*, *lug*, and *tuaj*, respectively. These verbs can take an argument in the form of an unmarked place name or a locative phrase with a preposition. Beyond this use, Jarkey argues that the verbs communicate deictic information, namely, the direction of the motion in relation to the speaker. In final position in an SVC, these verbs can appear without a locative phrase, in which case their sole purpose is to communicate this deictic information.

In contrast to Jarkey’s treatment of White Hmong, Harriehausen (1990: pp. 152-153) identifies two deictic verbs: *lug* (come) and *moog* (go), while Kunyt (1984: pp. 19) includes *tuaj*. These verbs were already included in the list of verbs of motion, but their precise meaning appears to be based on their position within the phrase. Consequently, Harriehausen treats them as a distinct class when in final position. In agreement with Jarkey, she argues that these deictic verbs communicate motion with reference to the speaker.

45. nwg tuaj hov twg tuaj.
 3sg come where come
 “Where does he come from?” (Kunyt, 1984: pp. 19)

46. kuv moog tom teb lug.
 1sg go at field come
 “I come back from the field.” (Kunyt, 1984: pp. 19)

4.4 Locative phrases

Green Hmong makes use of a class of words reservedly called “prepositions” by Harriehausen (1990: pp. 64), which indicate both direction as well as location. She hesitates to refer to them as full prepositions, citing, specifically, the fact that they do not always appear before the modified noun, preferring to refer to them instead as ““prepositional particles”. Kunyot (1984: pp. 75) shows no such reservation and treats these words simply as prepositions.

4.4.1 Word order

Although the particles or, at least, homophonic particles are used in other syntactic roles (adverb of place, demonstrative pronouns), the syntactic structure of the locative phrase defines their role in the sentence. Kunyot (1984) provided the structure as follows:

Locative Phrase = +/- Preposition. +Item (Noun Phrase/Demonstrative)

(Adapted from Kunyot, 1984: pp. 68)

47. puab nyob tom tsev.
 3pl be at house
 “They are at home.” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 68)

4.4.2 Prepositions

The particles are divided into two groups below. The first group contains deictic locative particles, that is, particles that indicate the location of an object in relation to the present location of the speaker. The second group contains particles that are not deictic and, rather, refer to the relative positions of objects mentioned in the sentence.

4.4.2.1 Deictic prepositions

1. Huv and sau

These two prepositions simply indicate the location where an action takes place. The two particles are differentiated by their vertical position relative to the speaker, where *huv* indicates a location below the middle of the speaker's body, while *sau* refers to locations above the same point (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 65). Both Harriehausen and Kunyot (1984: pp. 75) give "in" as a possible translation for *huv* and Kunyot translates *sau* as "on."

48. Lub npaas nyob sau lub thawv huv peg teg.
 (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 65)
 CL ball remain LOC CL box LOC floor
 "The ball is in the box on the floor."

These words have a further use, where they can be used after the NP in the locative phrase, which emphasizes the relative vertical position even more clearly than the pre-positional phrase, as indicated by the following sentence:

49. Cov dlej nyob cov nyom huv. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 68)
 CL dog remain CL grass LOC
 "The dogs are on the lawn down there."

2. Huv qaab

This is a compound word built from the words *huv* and *qaab* (floor). This composition simply means "under", and is the first of several compounds that have a prepositional meaning (in the sense that they are best translated as specific prepositions). This meaning is most clearly seen in the following sentence:

50. Peter nyob huv qaab peb. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 70)
 Peter remain under 1pl
 "Peter is sitting below us."

This compound, as well as the locative particle *sau*, can be further combined with the word *saab* (side) in order to create the compounds *saab huv qaab* (floor) and *saab sau* (roof) (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 69-70).

3. Peg

This particle has myriad possible uses, including “North”, “from” “far away” and “there overhead”. Based on the translations offered by Harriehausen, it is possible for several of these implications at once, such as the following sentences:

51. Nwg tuaj peg San Francisco tuaj.
 3sg come LOC-far north San Francisco come
 “He/she is coming from San Francisco (the speaker is in Santa Barbara, ca. 450 km north).”
52. Kuv moog peg Fresno.
 1sg go LOC-far north Fresno
 “I am going to Fresno (ca. 400 km north[.])” (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 74-75)

4. Nraag

This particle is the counterpart to *peg*, in that it carries the opposite meanings of “South”, and “there below”, though it is similar in its meanings of “from” and “far away”. Harriehausen (1990: pp. 75) offers example sentences with the same structures as examples 9 and 10, except the cities of San Francisco and Fresno were replaced by Los Angeles, which is south from Santa Barbara (where Harriehausen’s informant(s) were located). *Nraag* was used identically to *peg* in these examples, save the fact that it referred to a location to the south of the speaker, rather than the north.

A further use of *peg* and *nraag* is to indicate a vertical difference similar to that of *huv* and *sau*, except that the objects described in this way by *peg* and *nraag* are a significant distance away from the speaker, as in the example:

53. lb lub luav tuaj nraag haav tuaj.
 one CL car come LOC vale come
 “A car is coming from there below.”

5. Tim

Tim/tid, in addition to serving as a demonstrative pronoun, as discussed in the previous chapter, is used identically to the standard uses of *peg* and *nraag* described above, with the exception that it indicates locations to the East. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 76)

Tim can also be used as a locative particle for what Harriehausen (1990: pp. 81) calls “bestimmte Beziehungen” (special relationships), for example, the target of an action, such as the following sentence:

54. Kuv pov lub npaas rua tim phab ntsaa.
 1sg throw CL ball DIR LOC wall
 “I am throwing the ball at the wall.”

6. Tom

Tom/tod is the counterpart to *tim*, inasmuch as it refers to locations west from the speaker. It is also the particle used when the speaker does not know the direction of the indicated location, so it can also be translated as “over there”. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 76-77) Similarly, it can be used to indicate objects that are an unknown distance from the speaker (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 80-81)

55. peb yuav moog tom kiab.
 1pl will go to market
 “We will go to the market.” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 75)

7. Ntawm nuav

Harriehausen (1990: pp. 77-78) identifies this as a single morpheme constructed out of two other locative particles, explained in detail later in this section. This morpheme can appear as a unit before or after a noun or be divided by the NP it modifies (e.g. *ntawm lub tsev nuav* (this house)). Harriehausen argues that this morpheme is used in two ways:

- 1) LOC: A pre- (or post-) positional particle indicating an object that is very close to the speaker, specifically close enough to be touched.

- 2) DEM: As a postpositional demonstrative translating as “this __ here”.

8. Nuav

Nuav is a particle indicating objects that are very close to the speaker, but not close enough to be touched. Harriehausen (1990: pp. 78-79) identifies three uses:

- 1) LOC: As a prepositional particle indicating something that is near, but out of range of touch.
- 2) DEM: “This”
- 3) To communicate a general idea of “here”, as in the example:

56. Tug miv ntxhais kws sab nyob nuav.
 CL girl RCM tall remain LOC
 “The girl, who is tall, lives here.”

9. Ntawm/ntawd

According to Harriehausen (1990: pp.79-80), this preposition has three uses:

- 1) LOC: “Near”, “there”. This preposition can appear before or after the modified noun.
- 2) DEM: “That”, i.e. “that book”.
- 3) A particle to indicate the point of origin for verbs of motion or, in the case of stative verbs, to indicate a location that is near to the subject of the sentence, not the speaker. In this latter use, Harriehausen states that any other locative particle, when placed instead of *ntawm*, will change the point of reference to the speaker, not the subject of the sentence.

57. puab tuaj ndawm kuv tsev.
 3pl come at 1sg house
 “They come to my house.” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 18)

4.4.2.2 Non-deictic particles

1. “Ze” and “npuas”

These particles are nearly identical in their uses, meaning “next to”, “near to”, except *npuas* can indicate contact between the linked objects, as in the following sentence:

58. puab nyob ze ghov rooj.
 3pl be near door
 “They are (sit) near the door.” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 18)

59. Peter nreg npuas tug ntoo. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 82-83)
 Peter stand LOC CL tree
 “Peter is standing by/leaning on the tree.”

2. Various Prepositions

<u>ua ntej</u>	-	“in front of”
<u>ua qaab</u>	-	“behind”
<u>saab sis</u>	-	“on the right side of”
<u>saab laug</u>	-	“on the left side of”
<u>saab nrau</u>	-	“on the other side of”
<u>ntsau zoov</u>	-	“outside of”
<u>saab</u> — <u>tid</u>	-	“on the opposite side of” (the NP appears between the two components of this compound)

(Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 83-85)

4.4.2.3 Directional preposition

Rua

The particle *rua* is somewhat exceptional, both for its widespread use and its ability to function without a verb. In all cases, it carries the meaning of movement or conveyance toward something. Although she does not explain it precisely this way, Harriehausen (1990: pp. 88-90) describes three distinct uses for the particle:

- a) As a particle either independent from or in place of a verb (she is unwilling to make a commitment toward either explanation), which describes a simple, completed motion

event. It cannot be understood with present time reference. In this use, it is always paired with a LOC particle:

60. Peter rua tom lub hoob. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 88)
 Peter DIR LOC CL room
 “Peter went to the room. / * Peter is going to the room.”

- b) As a particle to indicate the target direction of a motion verb. In this use, it is always accompanied by a LOC particle:

61. Peter moog rua tom haav dlej. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 89)
 Peter go DIR LOC river
 “Peter is going to the river.”

- c) As a particle indicating the indirect object of a verb. In this use, *rua* appears directly before the modified NP, with no other Locative particle necessary.

62. Kuv muab nwg phau ntawv rua nwg. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 89)
 1sg give 3sg CL book DIR 3sg
 “I am giving him/her his/her book.”

It is important to note that *rua* is not used to answer questions regarding direction. For example, in answer to the question “where did the man go?” *tom tab lab* (LOC + store) is an acceptable answer, while *rua (tom) tab lab* (DIR + LOC + store) is not (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 88).

4.5 Pre- and postverbs

Kunyot (1984, pp. 85) provides the following chart to show the use and order of all of the preverbs that he was able to identify. He appears to use the terms “preverb” and “postverb” to describe the syntactic position of each morpheme when it is used in a sentence, particularly in combination with other preverbs.

Preverb 3	Preverb 2	Preverb 1	Main Verb	Translation
			sau ntawv	“to write”
		txawj	sau ntawv	“able to write”

		tau	sau ntawv	“wrote”
		feej	sau ntawv	“often write”
	xaav		sau ntawv	“want to write”
yuav tsum			sau ntawv	“must write”
yuav			sau ntawv	“will write”
tsim nyob			sau ntawv	“should write”
saam sim			sau ntawv	“be writing”
taab tom			sau ntawv	“be writing”
tseem			sau ntawv	“still writing”

(Adapted from Kunyot, 1984: pp. 85)

Kunyot (1984: pp. 85-86) split the preverbs into three classes for two reasons. First, when members of third group are used in a sentence, they may not be directly negated with *tsi*, while members of the first and second groups may. Second, when more than one preverb is used in a single sentence, they must occur in the presented order (i.e., preverb 3 - preverb 2 - preverb 1 - main verb).

These preverbs, along with the postverbs *tau* (meaningfully distinct from its preverbal use) and *lawm* represent the means by which Green Hmong expresses modality, tense, and aspect, as in the following examples.

4.5.1 Modality

Each of the modal preverbs and postverb is used in a consistent manner, with the meanings “know how” (*txawj*), “can” (postverbal *tau*), “will” (*yuav*), “must” (*yuav tsum*), and “should” (*tsim nyob*).

63. Nwg twm tau ntawv. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 180)
 3sg read ATT writing
 “He/she can read the writing.”

64. Kuv yuav tsum twm ntawv no swb. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 182)
 1sg MOD read writing night DEM
 “I must read tonight.”

4.5.2 Time Reference

Verbs in Green Hmong are not inflected according to tense, meaning that any time reference must be explicitly stated by means of temporal adverbs such as *pig kig* (tomorrow) or *naag mo* (yesterday). Additionally, two of Kunyot’s (1984) preverbs often imply a time reference: *tau*, which, although it strictly serves as an attainment marker in all of its uses, may be translated with the English simple past tense when used preverbally; and *yuav*, which is similar in meaning to the English modal “will”.

65. Nwg tsi tau ua. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 54)
 3SG NEG ATT do
 “He/she did not do it.”

66. Pig kig niam yuav yuav txiv ntoo rua kuv.
 Tomorrow mother will buy fruit to 1sg
 “My mother will buy fruit for me tomorrow.” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 17)

In addition to Kunyot’s (1984) temporal preverbs, Harriehausen (1990: pp. 54-56) discussed an additional option for future time reference, *maam*, which carries a stronger sense of necessity and unwillingness than *yuav*, which is usually used to express a desire or willingness.

67. Nwg maam ua hauj lum pig kig.
 3sg FUT do work tomorrow
 “He/she will (have to) work tomorrow.”

68. Nwg maam tuag lum coo.
 3sg FUT die next year
 “He/she will (have to) die next year.” (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 55)

4.5.3 Aspect

Green Hmong is also able to express two aspects, the perfective and imperfective, by means of pre- and postverbs. This is demonstrated by the following examples:

69. Kuv tau moog tsev lawm. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 56-57)
 1sg PST go house COMPL
 "I have gone home."

70. Kuv taab tom pw. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 57)
 1sg CONT sleep
 "I was sleeping. / While I slept..."

4.6 Negation and interrogation

As with other modifications of the verb phrase in Green Hmong, negative statements and certain types of questions are formed using particles inserted into the VP. The use of these particles is straightforward.

4.6.1 Negation

Green Hmong uses two negating particles, outlined below:

1. Tsi

Tsi is used to form almost all negative constructions, where it is simply placed before the negated verb or adjective. If used in a clause with multiple verbs or pre- and postverbs, it can be used to negate each verb, with the exception of what Kunyot (1984: pp. 85) identifies as members of the "preverb 3" class (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 59).

2. Ntxhob

Ntxhob is used to negate imperative sentences, in which it appears at the beginning of the phrase:

71. Ntxhob dlha ntawm koj lub txaaj lug.
 (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 59)
 NEG-IMP jump LOC 2sg CL bed come
 “Don’t jump on the bed.”

4.6.2 Interrogatives

In addition to the question words introduced elsewhere, Green Hmong uses two interrogative particles to form yes or no questions:

1. Puas

Puas appears directly before the verb in the interrogative VP, as in the following example:

72. Koj puas noj mov. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 60)
 2sg Q eat rice
 “Would you like to eat?”

2. Los

Los appears in sentence final position, where it serves a similar role to the question “right?”, when it appears after a statement in English, as in “he hasn’t eaten, right?”:

73. Nwg tsi tau noj mov los. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 60)
 3sg NEG PST eat rice AFFIRM
 “He/she hasn’t eaten, right??”

Los may also be used to ask alternative questions, as in the following example:

74. Koj yuav noog nkauj los sau ntawv
 2sg will listen song or write book
 “Will you listen to the song or write a book?” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 112)

4.7 Adverbs

Harriehausen (1990) does not refer to adverbs as a distinct class of words, though she does refer to the adverbial use of other sentence elements. The use of temporal phrases, such as *naag mo* (yesterday) and *pig kig* (tomorrow) as adverbs has already been noted in the discussion of time

reference, and the adverbial use of certain locative particles has been alluded to. Beyond these examples, it is also possible to use adjectives in an adverbial manner.

Harriehausen (1990: pp. 146) relates the adverbial use of adjectives to the attributive use of the same, where an adjective can modify a noun by being placed in the position immediately following. Similarly, then, a verb is modified by an adjective placed in the position immediately following the verb. These adverbs, as in their attributive position, be combined using a coordinating conjunction:

75. A me ka has lug txawv hab ceev.
 American speak strangely COORD quickly
 “Americans speak strangely and quickly.”

4.8 Serial Verb Constructions

Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs) are one of the more difficult aspects of the grammar of Green Hmong to define. This study is complicated by the fact that Harriehausen (1990) does not discuss verb serialization in the context of existing research on the phenomenon. Kunyot (1984) does make reference to serialization, although he prefers the term “additive compounding”, which he uses to refer to a more limited number of structures than other literature. For this reason, Jarkey’s much more comprehensive 1991 dissertation, *Serial Verbs in White Hmong: A Functional Approach* will be used as a guide for this discussion. Her descriptions of serialization in the White dialect will be considered closely, then compared with the available data on comparable constructions in Green Hmong.

Jarkey (1991) conducted, in part, a survey of the literature on SVCs in Hmong as well as other serializing languages up to the time of writing. What she found was that the term had been applied to a wide variety of syntactic patterns, all of which contain a series of verbs or “verb-phrase-like components” without any overt linkage such as conjunctions or complementizers. This definition she rejected as too broad (80-82) and set out to define the phenomenon more precisely through

investigation of several questions raised by the research to that point, most notably, whether an SVC comprises a single grammatical clause or if it consists of multiple clauses where the coordinating and subordinating conjunctions have simply been elided. If an SVC represents a single clause, the further question rises as to its syntactic treatment; is it a series of connected VPs, or do the constituent verbs make up a single, complex VP (88-89)? Although the possible answers to this latter question are worthy of investigation, the present study will notate SVCs as such, which will suffice to understand the syntactic ordering of the components.

Jarkey's (1991: pp. 147) conclusion was that a true SVC (as opposed to superficially similar constructions, which she defines and discusses later in the dissertation) in White Hmong must exhibit all of the following traits:

- i) A series of two or more concatenated verbs, with or without intervening core arguments;
- ii) No overt form of linkage;
- iii) At least one shared core argument;
- iv) A single set of core operators (i.e. deontic modality);
- v) A single set of peripheral operators (e.g. tense, status (epistemic modality), illocutionary force);
- vi) A single set of peripheral arguments; the verbs belong to a single clause.
- vii) No pause between the juncts (i.e. pause probabilities closer to those between lexical items within a clause, rather than between clauses).
- viii) Neither junct is embedded as an argument of another.
- ix) The juncts represent different facets of a single proposition.

Some of the concepts used by Jarkey (1991) in these criteria are taken from Role and Reference Grammar (pp. 132-133) to describe the syntactic linkage between the component verbs of an SVC.

Although this approach is not used in the present study, it is useful to briefly review it in order to understand Jarkey's terminology.

According to Role and Reference Grammar, first proposed by William Foley and Robert Van Valin Jr. (1984), a clause is made up of three "layers": the "nucleus" (the predicate, most commonly a verb), the "core" (the nucleus in addition to its subcategorized arguments, i.e. subject, object, etc.), and the "periphery" (all additional arguments, tense, time phrases, locative, etc.) (Jarkey, 1991: pp. 133). In an SVC, the verbs or VPs are combined (referred to as "juncts", when combined (pp. 136)) at either the nuclear level or the core level, leaving the periphery (rule vi.) and the core operators (rule iv), which are distinct from the core arguments, i.e. modality (pp. 134-135), intact. In short, Jarkey's argument is that the verbs within an SVC must share tense, mood, and other peripheral information and be linked by one of the core arguments (subject or object). Based on this definition, Jarkey describes four specific types of SVCs in White Hmong.

4.8.1 Cotemporal SVCs

Jarkey (1991) identifies two distinct types of cotemporal SVCs in White Hmong: motion and motion and action (pp. 157). The first type has already been discussed along with the semantic classifications of motion verbs. The syntactic structure for this construction is repeated here. The second type can further be divided into two types, Action and Motion and Action and Stance. Jarkey (1991: pp. 168) argues that Action and Motion SVCs typically express the action first, followed by the motion, and should be interpreted as simultaneous actions, as in the following White Hmong example:

76. Ces nplej thiab pob kws q̣w zom zews los.
 CONJ rice and corn shout together come.home
 "And then the rice and the corn came home, all shouting at once." (Jarkey, 1991: pp. 168)

By contrast, the Action and Stance construction expresses the stance (interpreted by Jarkey as a motion verb) first, followed by the action, as in the following White Hmong sentence:

77. Nws sawv ntsug noj mov.
 3SG stand be.upright eat rice
 “He ate standing up.” (Jarkey, 1991: pp. 168)

With a handful of exceptions, Jarkey (1991) states that cotemporal SVCs consisting of two action verbs are generally ungrammatical (pp. 169-170).

4.8.1.1 Cotemporal SVCs in Green Hmong

Cotemporal motion SVCs appear to follow the same pattern as White Hmong and are the focus of Harriehausen’s (1990) entire discussion of the SVC structure. The only examples available in Harriehausen (1990) and Kunyot (1984) represent combinations of two or more motion verbs.

78. Nwg tov qaab moog tsev.
 3sg return go house
 “He goes back home.” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 19)
79. Puab dhla lug ndawm nuav.
 3pl run come at this
 “They run down here.” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 19)

4.8.2 Causative SVCs

According to Jarkey (1991), causative SVCs are somewhat unique among the SVCs present in White Hmong, in that the shared core argument is not the subject. Rather, the object of the first, transitive verb is understood as the subject of the following intransitive or motion verb (pp. 178-181). This transfer is clearly shown by the following White Hmong sentence:

80. Kuv xa ib tsab ntawv mus rau Sydney.
 1SG send one CLF letter go to Sydney
 “I sent a letter to Sydney.”
 not: “I sent a letter and (then) went to Sydney.” (Jarkey, 1991: pp. 181)
81. Pov pob los rau kuv.
 Throw ball come to 1SG
 “Throw a ball to me.” (Jarkey, 1991: pp. 247)

There are a number of syntactic and semantic restrictions governing which verbs, precisely, may appear in this type of construction, but the general rule is as mentioned above: the first verb must be

transitive and the second either intransitive or a motion verb (Jarkey, 1991: pp. 185-188). Jarkey (1991) describes this construction as describing causation, i.e. the transitive action upon the object causes the object to perform the intransitive action/movement communicated by the second verb, whether intentional or unintentional (pp. 192).

4.8.2.1 Causative SVCs in Green Hmong

Harriehausen (1990) does not explicitly discuss the causative construction, though a handful of sentences appearing in her grammar display the pattern described by Jarkey (1991), such as the following:

82. Nwg thaws ncig rooj. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 159)
 3sg move chair turn around
 “He/she turned the stool around.”
83. Nwg kiv lug mpaas moog. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 159)
 3sg turn CL ball go
 “He/she spun the ball away.”

Harriehausen (1990) analyzes these two sentences as motion SVCs, though she does recognize that they are exceptional, in that the SVC is interrupted through a direct object (pp. 159). It does not appear to be unreasonable to apply Jarkey’s (1991) causative structure to these sentences, particularly as sentence 36 contains a marked resemblance to sentence 34, as analyzed by Jarkey, in that the second verb may be best understood with the immediately preceding NP (in both cases, “ball”) as subject.

Harriehausen (1990) does not give any counterparts to sentence 35, though in sentences with similar meanings, she appears to prefer an indirect object with the particle *rua*.

84. Kuv saa ndawv rua nwg. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 187)
 1sg send letter DIR 3sg
 “I am sending him/her the letter.”

4.8.3 Accomplishment SVCs

Jarkey (1991: pp. 214) describes a class of SVCs made up of two verbs, the first of which depicts an attempt, the second of which indicates the success of the attempt. In this structure, the object NP

must appear after all verbs, rather than the typical pattern, where object NPs may appear between serialized verbs. The following examples in White Hmong clearly demonstrates the structure:

85. Kuv mus raws cuag lawv.
 1SG go pursue reach 3PL
 “I caught up with them.” (Jarkey, 1991: pp. 214)
86. Koj puas noj tau kua txob?
 2SG QUEST eat get red.pepper
 “Can you eat red peppers?” (Jarkey, 1991: pp. 229)

4.8.3.1 Accomplishment SVCs in Green Hmong

As with causative SVCs, Harriehausen (1990) does not discuss anything resembling Jarkey’s (1991) accomplishment SVC structure as an SVC, though she does analyze similar sentences, all of which use *tau*, as a modal construction with the exception of the following sentence, where *tau* is used as a main verb indicating attainment of the object:

87. Nwg ua tau nyaj ntaw ntaw. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 93)
 3sg make get money much
 “He makes a lot of money.”

Jarkey’s approach to the latter two sentences, however, approaches Harriehausen’s modal use of *tau*, lending credence to that understanding. Further, the modal construction in Green Hmong demonstrates features that are not present in an SVC, according to Jarkey’s definition, namely, the modal can be independently negated. Therefore, *tau* can generally be considered as a modal verb. Harriehausen does not discuss constructions with any other accomplishment verbs than *tau*.

4.8.4 Disposal SVCs

The final type of SVC described by Jarkey (1991) handles the disposal of objects. This type of SVC is concerned with two transitive verbs which are, unlike an accomplishment SVC, separated by a shared object NP (pp. 240). Jarkey argues that the first verb “leads up to” the second (pp. 246), which always expresses disposal, a term which Jarkey uses in reference to a similar structure in Chinese which does

not always have strictly to do with disposing or destroying the object, but rather expresses a form of impingement on the object. Jarkey applies this same principal to White Hmong, so that disposal SVCs do not necessarily describe discardment, but include other actions as well (pp. 249-250). Examples in White Hmong follow:

88. Nws pov nws rab hneev tseg.
 3SG throw 3SG CLF crossbow leave
 “He threw his crossbow down.” (Jarkey, 1991: pp. 247)
89. Kuv tso nws tseg.
 1SG release 3SG leave
 “I abandoned him.” (Jarkey, 1991: pp. 243)

4.8.4.1 Disposal SVCs in Green Hmong

There are no examples resembling Jarkey’s (1991) disposal SVCs in Harriehausen’s (1990) grammar. There are sentences which follow the same syntactic order (transitive verb + NP + transitive verb), but they most closely resemble Jarkey’s purpose construction, discussed below.

4.8.5 Superficially similar constructions

Jarkey (1991) names several types of structures in White Hmong that appear to follow the same patterns as SVCs but can be variously shown to deal with more than one proposition. Because multicausal constructions are beyond the scope of the present study, only three of these constructions will be discussed at length.

1. Purpose construction

The purpose construction, as described by Jarkey (1991) consists of two verbs which are simply juxtaposed and which share the same subject, where the second verb indicates the intention behind the action described by the first (pp. 355). This pattern can be differentiated from SVCs in that the second verb can be negated independently from the first, showing that it expresses an action unrealized from the perspective of the sentence (pp. 358-359):

90. Lawv zaum tham tab sis lawv ho tsis tham.
 3PL sit chat but 3PL actually NEG chat
 “They sat down to chat, but actually they didn’t chat.” (Jarkey, 1991: pp. 359)

This construction is commonly used, particularly to express the instrument used to accomplish a task (Jarkey, 1991: pp. 362):

91. Nws muab rab riam hlais nqaij.
 3SG take CLF knife slice meat
 “She took the knife (to) slice (some) meat.”
 (i.e. “she sliced meat with a knife.”) (Jarkey, 1991: pp. 362)

2. State verbs used attributively and adverbially

As discussed earlier in Green Hmong, adjectives, called by Jarkey (1991) “state verbs”, can be used as attributes of a NP and adverbially with a VP. In certain sentence structures, these uses may resemble causative SVCs, in that the adjective appears after an object NP, which can often be interpreted three ways: as a causative SVC (the verb causes the object to take on the attribute described by the adjective), as an attributive adjective (the verb is done to an object which has the attribute described by the adjective), or as an adverb (the verb is performed in a manner described by the adjective) (pp. 372-376). The ambiguity between the latter two options is shown in the following sentence:

92. Lawv noj nqaij nyoos, tab sis peb noj nqaij siav.
 3PL eat meat raw but 1PL eat meat cooked
 “They eat meat raw but we eat meat cooked.” (adverbial)
 [also: “they eat raw meat but we eat cooked meat.” (attributive)] (Jarkey, 1991: pp. 375)

3. Transitive verbs used descriptively

Jarkey (1991: pp. 379-380) also observed transitive verbs apparently used as attributes modifying object nouns, such as the following example:

93. Cov poj niam ua mov noj.
 CLF.PL woman make rice eat
 “The women make food (to) eat.” (Jarkey, 1991: pp. 379)

Jarkey (1991: pp. 380) differentiates between this structure and SVCs (as well as the purpose construction, though she does not discuss it directly) by means of fronting, a process not discussed in the present study:

94. Mov noj mas, cov poj niam ua.
 rice eat TOP CLF.PL woman make
 “As for food to eat, the women make (it).” (Jarkey, 1991: pp. 380)

4.8.5.1 Superficially similar constructions in Green Hmong

1. Harriehausen (1990: pp. 240-241) considers the syntactic pattern of Jarkey’s (1991) purpose construction to represent two distinct constructions in Green Hmong, the “pivot” construction and the purpose construction. These two differ in the semantic limitations and roles of the first verb and the object of that verb.

The pivot construction includes sentences in which the object of the first verb, which must be transitive (in order to take an object), can be understood as the subject of the complement, as in the example:

95. Nwg caw John noj mov. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 240)
 3sg invite John eat rice
 “He/she invited John to the meal.”

The purpose construction is somewhat more open, in that the subject performs the first verb in order to achieve the second, therefore acting as the subject of both verbs. This allows intransitive verbs to fill the first verb slot (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 241):

96. John txhus cawg thov nwg. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 241)
 John kneel implore 3sg
 “John knelt down to beg her.”

2. While neither Harriehausen (1990) nor Kunyot (1984) discusses the same potential ambiguity that Jarkey (1991) described in White Hmong, the attributive and adverbial uses of adjectives in Green Hmong have been shown to follow the same patterns that lead to the

ambiguity in White Hmong; therefore, it can be hypothesized that the same phenomenon may occur in Green Hmong.

3. Neither Harriehausen (1990) nor Kunyot (1984) makes reference to or offers an example of attributive transitive verbs, as introduced by Jarkey (1991).

5 Clausal syntax

Because the present study is limited to monoclausal constructions in Green Hmong, the syntax appearing within a single clause, which may, as in English, constitute a complete sentence, will be the highest level investigated.

Green Hmong follows an S-V-O pattern in clausal constructions (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 184). A simple declarative statement, then, would be made up of a Noun Phrase followed by a Verb Phrase (with a following Noun Phrase if the verb is transitive). By making use of the various Noun and Verb Phrase structures already discussed, this pattern is used to construct a wide variety of sentences. There are, however, several types of monoclausal sentences that follow a more complex pattern. Several of these is described below.

5.1 Existential Clauses

In order to state the simple existence of a subject, Green Hmong makes use of the verb *muaj*, which means “have” when used as a full verb, in sentence initial position (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 174-176; Kunyot, 1984: pp. 22).

97. Muaj ntseg nyob huv haav dlej. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 175)
Be fish remain LOC sea
“There are fish in the sea.”

98. Thaum ub muaj ob tug kwv tij.
time long have two CL brothers
“A long time ago there were two brothers.” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 22)

5.2 Comparative Clauses

Harriehausen (1990) describes three types of comparative clauses: equation clauses, comparative clauses, and superlative clauses (pp. 188-192). Each is detailed below.

5.2.1 Equational Clauses

Harriehausen (1990: pp. 188) and Kunyot (1984: pp. 23) both describe three patterns for equational clauses, based on what is being compared. The first is built according to the following structure:

Equational Clause = +Subject 1 (NP). +Descriptive VP. +Equational marker. +Subject 2 (NP)

(Adapted from Kunyot, 1984: pp. 23)

In this type of equational clause, two subjects are equated with regard to a single attribute, which is expressed through the descriptive verb phrase. There are multiple possible markers, including *le* and *luab nqaum le*

99. Kuv miv le koj. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 189)
 1sg small EQ 2sg
 "I am as small as you are."

100. Kuv loj luab nqaum le koj.
 1sg big EQ 2sg
 "I am as big as you." (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 23)

The second type is constructed as follows:

Equational Clause = +Subject 1 (NP). +Equational marker (*zoo le*). +Subject 2 (NP).

(Adapted from Kunyot, 1984: pp. 23)

This pattern is used to express simple similarity or equality. *Zoo le* may be substituted with *thoob le* or *thoob le* to indicate “same in size” (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 189)

101. Kuv tsev zoo le nwg tsev. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 189)
 1sg house EQ 3sg house
 “My house is like his/her house.”

Finally, two subjects can be compared with regards to an adverb modifying a shared action.

Equational Clause = +Subject 1 (NP). +VP (with or without direct object). +Adverb. +Equational marker (*npaum le*). +Subject 2 (NP).

(Adapted from Kunyot, 1984: pp. 23)

102. Kuv muaj nyaj ndaw mpaum le koj. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 189)
 1sg have money much EQ 2sg
 “I have as much money as you.”

5.2.2 Comparative Clauses

Harriehausen (1990: pp. 191) and Kunyot (1984: pp. 24) identify two constructions to compare two NPs. The first compares two subjects with regards to an adjective.

Comparative Clause = +Subject 1 (NP). +Descriptive VP. +Comparative marker (*dlua* or *tshaaj*). + Subject 2 (NP).

(Adapted from Kunyot, 1984: pp. 24)

103. Tsuv luj dlua miv. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 191)
 tiger big COMP cat
 “A tiger is larger than a cat.”

104. Kuv ntshai tshaaj koj.
 1sg afraid COMP 2sg
 “I am more afraid than you.” (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 25)

The second pattern compares an adverb modifying a shared VP.

108. Nwg dlha sai tshaaj plawg. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 192)
 3sg run fast SUPL
 “He runs the fastest.”

109. Nwg nquag tsaaj plawg.
 3Sg dilligentSUPL
 “He is the most dilligent man.” (Kunyt, 1984: pp. 26)

5.3 Imperative Clauses

According to Harriehausen (1990: pp. 203-204) and Kunyt (1984: pp. 30-31), there are two basic structures used to create an imperative clause in Green Hmong:

- a) (Subj) + VP
- b) Subj1 + VP + Subj1

In the first pattern, it is not necessary for the subject, typically the 2sg pronoun *koj*, to be stated in the sentence. The emphasis is rather placed on the action that should be completed:

110. Moog qag qag. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 203)
 go fast fast
 “Go quickly!”

If the subject is the emphasized component, that is, if it is emphasized that you must perform the action and no one else, the subject is stated before the verb, then repeated after the verb (Kunyt, 1984: pp. 31):

111. Koj moog koj. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 204)
 2sg go 2sg
 “You should go!”

As mentioned previously, the imperative construction is the only environment in Green Hmong where the particle *ntxhob* is used to negate the sentence, where the particle *tsi* is used elsewhere.

5.4 Interrogative Clauses

The final monoclausal construction to be considered is the interrogative clause. There are a number of question types, each of which will be outlined below.

5.4.1 Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions are marked, as in English, by a question word. Because the question words often take the place of the syntactic element that they question, there is no consistent structure for open-ended questions.

- | | | |
|-------------------|---|--|
| <u>Leej twg</u> | - | “Who?”, takes the place of a NP in the interrogative clause.
(Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 133) |
| <u>Tlaab tsi</u> | - | “What?”, takes the place of a NP in the interrogative clause.
(Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 134) |
| <u>Le caag</u> | - | “How?”, appear after the verb in the interrogative clause.
(Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 134) |
| <u>Pis tsawg</u> | - | “How much?”, precedes a NP in the interrogative clause.
(Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 135) |
| <u>Ua le caag</u> | - | “Why?”, appears at the beginning of the interrogative clause.
(Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 134) |
| <u>Qhov twg</u> | - | “Where?”, appears in place of a locative phrase in the interrogative clause. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 135) |
| <u>Thawm tws</u> | - | “When?”, appears at the beginning of the interrogative clause.
(Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 136) |

5.4.2 Yes/No Questions

There are two types of yes or no questions that can appear in Green Hmong, according to Harriehausen (1990: pp. 205-207). In the first type, the interrogative particle *puas* is simply inserted before the verb in the sentence:

112. Tug miv puas yog tsaj. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 205)
 CL cat Q be animal
 “Is a cat an animal?”

When a sentence is followed by *puas yog*, the speaker questions the validity of the statement made previously (Kunyot, 1984: pp. 111):

113. Nwg nyam nwg ghov hauj lwm puas yog.
 (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 206)
 3sg like 3sg NOM work Q be
 “He/she likes his/her work, right?”

114. Koj tau moog saib Peter puas yog / puas tau.
 (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 206)
 2sg PST go LOC Peter Q be / Q PST
 “You went to Peter’s right?”

5.4.3 Alternative questions

According to Harriehausen (1990: pp. 207-209) and Kunyot (1984: pp. 110-111), alternative questions are formed according to the following rules:

- a) The repetition of the verb (the subject may optionally be repeated as well) in a negated form at the end of the sentence.
- b) The introduction of the word “los” (or) between the VPs
- c) Optionally, the interrogative particle “puas” may appear before the main verb.

115. Koj (puas) lug los (koj) tsis lug. (Harriehausen, 1990: pp. 208)
 2sg Q come or 2sg NEG come
 “Are you coming or not?”

6 Conclusion

Green Hmong is a language marked by significant lexical flexibility, paired with a near-total absence of inflection. Instead, the Hmong language makes use of syntactic rules to indicate each lexeme’s role in the phrase, clause, and sentence. This study has aimed to describe these rules at the phrasal and clausal levels by making use of the few written resources available, supplemented by the

more detailed research that is available for White Hmong. The study focuses on word classes and single clause level grammar. More complex clause grammar is described by Harriehausen (1990) and Kunyot (1984), but not in great detail. I found it necessary, for example, to follow Jarkey's (1991) research on Serial Verb Constructions in White Hmong due to the limited treatment that they received in Harriehausen's and Kunyot's works. Further research is necessary to expand the existing body of knowledge and aid future generations of scholars and language learners.

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